Layers of Greatness

A Biography of

Colonel Robert Rankin

by

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Genealogy website: http://freepages.rootsweb.com/~nivek/genealogy/
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Chapter 0

Preface

Most genealogists make a few independent discoveries. But, the vast majority of our knowledge of our ancestors is built upon the work of others around us and others that came before us. I have virtually no original claim to much of the material presented in this biography, although it may be the first time that this much information has been collected into one place on Robert Rankin. So, I first offer my thanks and gratitude for the work of others that has been gathered into this biography. And, I also offer my apologies if there are items or revelations that others have found that go without credit in this work - it would not be possible to specifically cite each and every item.

In addition, most of the information presented is done so without source citations. This choice was made to reduce the effort in producing the biography, and to make it a more narrative piece than a technical research piece. Other sources (e.g. ancestry.com) can be consulted to readily find source citations for large portions of what is found here. Where material is more obscure, less well known, or less readily available, I have tried to provide source citations and transcriptions.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

I do not know when I first became aware of Robert Rankin as one of my ancestors, although it was relatively early in the genealogy research of my family which began in 2003. One of my first discoveries about this man was that he was a member of the Society of the Cincinnati, an organization formed by General George Washington and the officers of the Continental Army as a means of staying in touch and supporting one another in the years following the Revolutionary War. From this I knew I had found an important ancestor in my family tree. But, from this superficial beginning there is so much more to Robert Rankin than I ever expected.

The title of this biography was chosen for this very reason. As I have spent time off and on over the past 15 years studying his life, I very much feel like I have been peeling back layers of greatness in this man and his life. Little by little I have learned how intelligent he was, how well-respected he was, how well connected he was in political circles, and how much he slowly contributed to this great country and several of its counties and states over the course of his long life.

It is my hope that as you read this biography that those layers of greatness will be revealed to you and, especially if he is also an ancestor of yours, that you will feel the sense of pride that I do in being one of his descendants. May we also represent and work for our families and country the way Robert did.

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Chapter 2

Youth and Ancestry

In all official documents and compiled histories, his name is always given as either Robert Rankins or Robert Rankin, the latter being the simplified surname used by all descendants and the former appearing to be the traditional, historical surname. No middle initial has ever been indicated.

Some genealogies give his name as Richard Robert Rankin. I do not know the source of this variation and do not give it the slightest credibility given the voluminous references using simply Robert Rankin and no known references including Richard or even so much as a middle initial. Given the very detailed depositions by Robert and his wife it is highly unlikely Robert had a middle name or initial for otherwise it would surely have been noted in these records.

There is no known documentation of Robert's parents. However, in the testimony of Abner S. Lipscomb (former Chief Justice of the Alabama Supreme Court) for Rankin's Revolutionary War pension, he indicates that Rankin was a "near kinsman" of Chief Justice John Marshall. Through deduction, reasoning, or documentation now lost to us, this has led to the conclusion that his mother was Margaret Masena Marshall, whose brother was Col. Thomas Marshall the father of the Chief Justice. This would make John a maternal first cousin of Robert. Thomas and Margaret were children of John "of the Forest" Marshall and Elizabeth Markham. I am not sure if research will ever fully confirm these relationships, but it is the tradition and evidence we have been given to this point.

As for Robert's father, his name has variously been given as "William Robert Rankin" and "Robert William Rankin". Virtually nothing is known about him. For myself, I simply call him "William Rankin." Whether this is right or wrong is well beyond my knowledge at this point.

Additionally, nothing is certainly known about the ancestry of the Rankin family or their immigration to America.

Some genealogies give Robert's birth information as 18 Sep 1753 in Frederick County, Virginia. I have seen no documentation for either this exact date or place. The best that I have certainly proven is that Robert was born in 1753 in Virginia. During the War he did "return home" to Frederick County to marry Peggy, so certainly he (and possibly his parents) lived there when he was a young adult. But, I have not seen evidence to tie him or his parents to Frederick County in 1753.

In the Revolutionary War pension file for a William Rankin from the state of Virginia, the deposition of John Kercheval indicates that William had a brother named Robert "who was an officer." Given both men's service in the Virginia Continental Line, this clearly indicates our Robert had a brother

named William who served as a Private during the War. William was born about 1759 and died on 12 Apr 1836 in Mason County, Kentucky, a place that Robert lived for many years. William was buried in the Old Washington Cemetery, but his grave no longer has a visible marker.

Additionally, the will of a John Rankin in Mason County, Kentucky, dated 4 May 1819, mentions an "affectionate brother William Rankins." It has been assumed that this is a clear indication that Robert and William had a brother named John. Nothing more is known of other possible siblings to the three brothers.

The story has been told that as a young man Robert learned surveying from his uncle Thomas Marshall and Thomas' business partner George Washington. While Robert's son William is known to have been a surveyor, there is no evidence Robert was a surveyor. So, at this point Robert knowing George Washington at this level of intimacy is merely an intriguing possibility. I am not even sure Washington was doing survey work in the late 1760's to 1770 time period. The only references I have seen to this are contained in summaries containing many other false and outlandish tales about Robert, so this may not be a true story either.

It should be noted that I have not personally been to Virginia to do detailed research in deed records and other county records to learn more about Robert Rankin and his parents. It is quite possible that such details as Robert's parentage and hypothesized exact birth place could be confirmed by such research.

Chapter 3

The War for Independence

In her testimony before the Sixth Judicial Court of the Republic of Texas on 22 Mar 1844, Peggy Rankin declared that her husband Robert "returned home" to Frederick County, Virginia, to marry her on 01 Oct 1781. This establishes Robert's place of residence during the Revolutionary War.

In his declaration on 18 Sep 1828, in Washington County, Alabama, Robert claims to have entered military service "in 1776." He recalls initially serving under Colonel Hugh Stevenson, and Robert served for the duration of the War.

In **June 1776**, the Continental Congress resolved to create the Maryland and Virginia Rifle Regiment. The unit combined three existing companies from Maryland and Virginia with six new companies - two from Maryland and four from Virginia. The field officers for the new unit were drawn from the original three companies based on their seniority, and **Hugh Stevenson** from Virginia became the Colonel. All company officers were appointed in the summer of 1776, and subsequent recruiting for the unit in the two states extended to the end of the year. Recruiting occurred in Frederick and Hartford Counties, Maryland, and Berkeley, **Frederick**, Loudoun, Fauquier, Prince William, and Culpepper Counties, Virginia. The enlisted men of the regiment served for **three years or the duration of the war**.

This certainly details Robert's entry point into military service for the Revolutionary War for it perfectly matches his own testimony about his enlistment - in 1776 under Col. Stevenson for the duration of the War. To trace Robert further, we need to look at the subsequent history of the Maryland and Virginia Rifle Regiment.

Around June 1777, a selection of elite Maryland and Virginia Rifle Regiment soldiers were placed in Capt. Gabriel Long's Provisional Rifle Company; the remaining soldiers were placed with Lieut. (and later Capt.) Philip Slaughter in the 11th Virginia Regiment who was the acting commander of the company during Gabriel Long's nearly two-year attachment to the Rifle Corps and its permanent commander after Long's resignation. Additionally, the Slaughter and related companies are documented to have fought at the battles of Brandywine and Germantown which matches the testimony of Robert's wife on 22 Mar 1844 regarding the major battles in which he participated.

If Robert actually joined the Maryland and Virginia Rifle Regiment, we should be able to trace him to either the Captain Gabriel Long Company or to the Captain-Lieutenant Philip Slaughter Company. Indeed this is the case.

As the muster rolls are traced below, Robert is consistently a member of the Captain William Brady Company which is listed along with or as a part of the Captain Gabriel Long Company. Eventually the Captain Brady Company is formally incorporated into the "Philip Slaughter detachment of the Long, Shepherd, West, and Brady companies."

Muster and Pay Roll Entries

Date	Rank	Regiment	Company	Remarks
May 1777	Sergeant	11th VA	Capt. William Brady	<Listed with the Capt. Gabriel Long Co. that includes the Shepherd, West, and Brady companies>
Jun 1777	Sergeant	11th VA	Capt. William Brady	Enlisted for 3 years
Jul 1777	Sergeant	11th VA	Capt. William Brady	
Aug 1777	Sergeant	11th VA	Capt. William Brady	Enlisted for 3 years
Sep 1777	Sergeant	11th VA	Capt. William Brady	Enlisted for 3 years
Oct 1777	Sergeant	11th VA	Capt. William Brady	
Nov 1777	Sergeant	11th VA	Capt. William Brady	Guard?
Dec 1777	Sergeant	11th VA	Capt. William Brady	
Jan 1778	Sergeant	11th VA	Capt. William Brady	
Feb 1778	Sergeant	11th VA	Lieut. Philip Slaughter	<Begin detachment from Capt. Long, Shepherd, West, and Brady companies under Lt. Philip Slaughter>; **Valley Forge**
Mar 1778	Sergeant	11th VA	Lieut. Philip Slaughter	Command; enlisted for 3 years; **Valley Forge**
Apr 1778	Sergeant	11th VA	Lieut. Philip Slaughter	<A detachment of the Capt. Charles Porterfield Company>
May 1778	Sergeant	11th VA	Lieut. Philip Slaughter	
Jun 1778	Sergeant	11th/15th VA	Capt. Chas. Porterfield	Enlisted for 3 years
Jul 1778	Sergeant	11th/15th VA	Capt. Chas. Porterfield	Enlisted for 3 years
Aug 1778	Sergeant	11th/15th VA	Capt. Chas. Porterfield	Enlisted 26 Aug 1776 for 3 years; acting forage master
Sep 1778	Sergeant	11th/15th VA	Capt. Chas. Porterfield	Enlisted 26 Aug 1776 for 3 years; ?
Oct 1778	Sergeant	11th/15th VA	Capt. Chas. Porterfield	Enlisted for 3 years; ?
Nov 1778	Sergeant	11th/15th VA	Capt. Chas. Porterfield	Enlisted for 3 years; ?
Dec 1778	Sergeant	7th VA	Capt. Chas. Porterfield	Acting forage master
Jan 1779	Sergeant	7th VA	Capt. Chas. Porterfield	?
Feb 1779	Sergeant	7th VA	Capt. Chas. Porterfield	Enlisted for 3 years; acting forage master
Mar 1779	Sergeant	7th VA	Capt. Chas. Porterfield	Enlisted for 3 years; acting forage master
Apr 1779	Sergeant	7th VA	Capt. Chas. Porterfield	Enlisted for 3 years; acting forage master
May 1779	Sergeant	7th VA	Capt. Chas. Porterfield	Enlisted 26 Aug 1776 for 3 years; acting forage master

Jun 1779	Sergeant	7th VA	Capt. Chas. Porterfield	Enlisted 26 Jul 1776 for 3 years; forage master
Jul 1779	Sergeant	7th VA	Capt. Chas. Porterfield	Promoted 04 Jul 1779; enlisted for 3 years
	Ensign	7th VA	Capt. William Johnston	Commissioned 04 Jul 1779
Aug 1779	Ensign	7th VA	Capt. William Johnston	Commissioned 04 Jul 1779; absent - in the light infantry
Sep 1779	Ensign	7th VA	Capt. William Johnston	Commissioned 04 Jul 1779
Oct 1779	Ensign	7th VA	Capt. William Johnston	Commissioned 04 Jul 1779
Nov 1779	Ensign	7th VA	Capt. William Johnston	Commissioned 04 Jul 1779

These muster rolls clearly indicate this is our Robert Rankin who initially enlisted in the Maryland and Virginia Rifle Regiment at the appropriate time - July 1776. Additionally, the data match very well with much of Robert and Peggy's testimony about his service record (promotion to Ensign, battles engaged in, service for the duration of the War).

There do not appear to be muster rolls extant beyond late 1779. However, the 7th Virginia Regiment is known to have been captured and taken prisoner at the Siege of Charleston on 12 May 1780, a detail that perfectly matches Robert's own testimony and the last extant muster roll above from just 6 months earlier.

In terms of Robert's presence at Valley Forge, his enlistment and the muster rolls are clear enough evidence. But, also consider the well-accepted sequence of events in late 1777. Washington himself led his troops in the battles of Brandywine and Germantown in September and November of 1777, battles in which Robert is known to have participated. Historical accounts are clear that Washington subsequently led these troops to Valley Forge in December. As a basic premise, the troops from these battles also endured the winter at Valley Forge. There will be exceptions (those discharged or "on command" elsewhere), so we must dig further to be certain Robert was present, as we have done above. But, as a general principle, he should have been at Valley Forge since his company fought in these battles with Washington and was subsequently taken to Valley Forge by the commander.

As a side note, the Maryland and Virginia Rifle Regiment took heavy losses at the Battle of Fort Washington in November 1776. As a member of this Regiment, it is quite likely Robert participated in this battle despite any first-hand testimony or evidence. We are all certainly fortunate he survived the battle.

Muster Roll Notes

In his testimony on 22 Jul 1844, in Washington County, Republic of Texas, Abner Lipscomb indicated that not only was Robert a "near kinsman" of Chief Justice John Marshall but he had also served in Marshall's company. Either Lipscomb was mistaken regarding Robert's service in Marshall's company or it occurred during a time period for which muster rolls are not extant for Robert as I have found no evidence of such service.

Summary of Robert Rankin's Military Service

- 26 Jul 1776 Enlistment, seemingly as a Sergeant, in the 11th Virginia Regiment for "three years or the duration of the War"
- 16 Nov 1776 Battle of Fort Washington (hypothesized)
- 11 Sep 1777 Battle of Brandywine
- 04 Oct 1777 Battle of Germantown
- Feb 1778 Valley Forge
- May 1778 11th and 15th VA Regiments incorporated / transferred to Capt. Porterfield Company
- Dec 1778 Moved to the 7th Virginia Regiment, Dec 1778
- 15 Jul 1779 Battle of Stony Point
- 04 Jul 1779 Appointed Ensign / transferred to 1st (Capt. Johnston) Company
- 01 Jan 1780 Appointed Lieutenant
- 12 May 1780 Captured and taken prisoner at the Siege of Charleston. He remained a prisoner of war until exchanged, at which time he states he received a promotion to Lieutenant (retroactive to 01 Jan 1780?).
- 01 Jan 1783 Discharged

As an officer who served to the conclusion of the War, Robert was a member of the Society of the Cincinnati.

Bounty Land Warrants

In multiple testimonies found in Robert's Revolutionary War pension file, he claims never to have received any payment for his services since the end of the War, including bounty land. This does not appear to be true. I would surmise that Robert meant he had never used such lands he had been given, but since he surely derived financial benefit from their sale I am not sure what to think. It is possible he was simply old and senile at this point or had derived so little benefit from the grants that he had no qualms in seeking benefits in his desperate financial situation.

Robert received two Virginia Revolutionary War bounty land warrants, #165 for 2,166 $^{2}/_{3}$ acres and #1485 for 200 acres. These were rolled into a single land patent for 2,866 $^{2}/_{3}$ acres issued in the Ohio military district on 28 Oct 1799. Robert soon sold this land grant to Henry Massie on 04 Feb 1800.

Robert also appears to have purchased the bounty land warrants from four other soldiers, #3890 through #3893 for a total of 400 acres. These were possibly rolled into and replaced by warrant #4729 for 444 acres which was patented in the Ohio military district on 25 Aug 1801 to David Davis whom Robert had sold the land grants to.

While it is possible there were other "Robert Rankins" from Virginia who served in the Revolutionary War, none seem to have had the prominence of our Robert, and the bounty land warrants discussed here generally seem to have been granted to a soldier of long service matching the ranks Robert is known to have held. By all accounts, these are bounty land warrants for our Robert Rankin.

Chapter 4

Marriage and Family

When Robert was paroled after the Siege of Charleston he went home for a time on furlough. It was at this time that he married Margaret “Peggy” Kendall Berry on 01 Oct 1781, in Frederick County, Virginia. Margaret was the son of Thomas Berry, Sr. (1733-1818) and Frances Ann Kendall (1737-1818). Thomas was Captain of a Virginia company for a period of time during the War and a well respected man in his own right, although he was court-martialed by George Washington himself.

Peggy’s father Thomas Berry was Captain of a company in the 8th Virginia Regiment during the American Revolution. He was from Frederick County, Virginia and was commissioned on 27 Mar 1776 (although one record indicates 16 Feb 1776). Records indicate he had at least once paid some of his men himself and was reimbursed by the Government later. He does NOT appear to have been at Valley Forge despite being listed as the captain of a company there. All of his muster roll records indicate he was either on furlough or on command in Virginia during this time period. The closest one can come is a deposition for one of his soldiers (George Seifret) in which he gives what appears to be firsthand knowledge of the soldier's discharge while at Valley Forge in Feb 1778. But it is still not conclusive whether Berry was actually present at the event or is simply relating knowledge.

On 18 Jul 1777 in Roxborough, Pennsylvania, Thomas Berry was convicted at a court martial by General George Washington for "Neglect of duty, in not having [his] men's arms in good order, and with disobedience of the General orders relating thereto." He was sentenced to a reprimand in general orders. In the first muster roll after this conviction, he is listed as "on guard" and in all remaining muster rolls until his resignation in Sep 1778 he is listed as "on furlough" or "on command in Virginia." It very much appears that this incident led to the end of his military career.

Additionally, Thomas was involved in a robbery investigation during the Revolutionary War. A fellow Captain had given him money to store in his chest that was later stolen. Unfortunately, Berry's deposition is too difficult to read to understand his view of the events.

Robert and Peggy would have ten children, eight of whom are documented in a notarized deposition by Thomas Betts on 11 Jul 1837, in St. Landry Parish, Louisiana. On 21 Oct 1844, in Montgomery County, Texas, Williford Cartwright testified that this listing of genealogical data was taken from the Rankin family Bible, a Bible which he had personally seen. The children and their birth dates are listed below along with information about them from other sources.

1. Thomas Berry Rankin (08 May 1783 - 30 Aug 1813): Thomas was named after his maternal grandfather. He died at the Battle of Fort Mims during the Creek Indian War.

2. Elizabeth Rankin (27 Jan 1785 - ?): Nothing is known about Elizabeth. Is it possible she was one of four Rankin children who had died before Peggy filed her 1844 deposition.

3. William Marshall Rankin, Sr. (24 Aug 1786 - 17 Apr 1857): Given the source of his older brother's name, it is quite possible that William's middle name gives a piece of evidence that the Rankin's are related to the Marshall family since it has been stated that Robert was a "near kinsman" of Chief Justice John Marshall. William served in the War of 1812, worked as Surveyor, and was a Justice of the Peace. He came to Mexican Texas with the Zachariah Landrum caravan in 1830.

4. Joseph Rankin (04 Nov 1788 - 30 Aug 1813): He died at the Battle of Fort Mims during the Creek Indian War.

5. John Keith Rankin (05 Jan 1791 - 17 Nov 1884): John fought in the War of 1812. He married Elizabeth Butler and moved from Washington Co., Alabama to Hinds County, Mississippi (later Rankin County, but not named for John). Moved to Texas during the 1840s, lived briefly in Polk County, then moved to DeWitt County.

6. James Rankin (27 Jun 1792 - ?): He died in Texas before 26 Apr 1847 since he is cited as deceased in his mother's will.

7. Frederick Harrison Rankin (15 Feb 1794 - 02 Jul 1874): Frederick received title to land that is now in Harris County (Rankin Road runs through his original land grant) as one of Stephen F. Austin's "Old Three Hundred" colonists.

8. Henry Rankin (07 Feb 1796 - ?): Nothing is known about Henry. Is it possible he was one of four Rankin children who had died before Peggy filed her 1844 deposition.

9. Massena Rankin (? - ?): Wife of Samuel McCombs. Her first husband was a Mr. Brown.

10. Frances Rankin (? - ?): Wife of Matthew Hubert. They also seem to have gone to Texas in 1830.

The most intriguing aspects of Robert's life related to his children are cursory connections to Stephen F. Austin through his son Frederick and much stronger connections to Sam Houston through the deaths of his sons Thomas and Joseph, through his son Frederick, and through his son-in-law Matthew Hubert. These connections will be developed further in later chapters.

Chapter 5

Laying Foundations

Mason County, Kentucky

Robert left Virginia some time after the War and is seen in what would become Mason County, Kentucky by Aug 1786. His name is seen very regularly in the documents and histories of early Mason County.

- Robert's service in the Kentucky militia led him from a rank of Captain to Colonel, and he was often referred to in later years as "Colonel Rankin" despite his official Revolutionary War service having ended with a rank of Lieutenant.
- He was named by the Kentucky legislature as a trustee of the new town of Charlestown in 1787.
- The first Mason County court was held at his home on 26 May 1789.
- Robert was named by the Kentucky legislature as a trustee of the new town of Washington in 1790.
- Robert was a delegate from Mason County to the Danville Convention in 1792 where the first constitution of Kentucky was framed.
- He was an elector from Mason County for the election of Kentucky state senators in 1792.
- Robert was a trustee of Franklin Academy in the town of Washington when it was founded in 1795.

Robert is also a footnote to an interesting historical fact in Mason County. The Marshall Key House in the town of Washington is today the Harriet Beecher Stowe Slavery to Freedom Museum. It is so named because it is the place where Stowe visited and witnessed a slave auction in 1833 from which she drew inspiration for some of her characters for the novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* she would write many years later. While the house was not built by Marshall Key until 1807, the original owner of the lot in 1789 was none other than… Robert Rankin.

Logan County, Kentucky

Robert was reported in Logan County, Kentucky in 1802. I have not researched his time at this location. The only mention I have seen of it is in the deposition of William Butler in Robert's Revolutionary War pension file.

Washington County, Alabama (Mississippi Territory)

Robert is seen in Washington County in the Mississippi Territory by 1810. He would remain in this area until at least 1830. As in Mason County, Kentucky, Robert again is regularly seen in the historical documents of Washington County. This is also where we see his stature continuing to increase with his multiple roles as a judge.

- Robert served as a Justice of the Peace in 1810
- Robert served as a Justice of Quorum in 1815
- Robert served as a Justice of the Peace in 1828

It is during this time that the fortunes of the Rankin family are believed to have turned for the worse. This was probably due to the economic distress caused by the Panic of 1819 which was driven by land speculation.

Robert is reported to have filed bankruptcy at some point in this time period. While this is unexpected for a man thought to be as respectable and responsible as Rankin, it was common at the time and may have even been caused by some extenuating circumstances.

For example, there is a trail of fragmentary evidence that a Sea Captain had an agreement with Robert to use his ship. Apparently the Sea Captain bragged about his ship to others and said nothing about the ship belonging to Robert Rankin. The Sea Captain died unexpectedly and the ship was sold at auction. Robert sent a letter asking Sam Houston to help him regain his ship. This occurred during the time of his bankruptcy. If true, this would may partially explain why he went into bankruptcy. (See the Stephen F. Austin letter in the Correspondence chapter for hints about this story.)

I also believe it was during this time that the Rankins may have had their first introduction to Sam Houston. After their two sons Thomas and Joseph were killed at the Battle of Fort Mims in 1813, it was Sam Houston that soon after led a retaliatory raid against the Creek Indians as revenge for the attack on Fort Mims. It is not out of the realm of possibility that Robert Rankin met Sam Houston during this time. It would certainly help to partly explain how they had contact some 23 years later in the weeks leading up to San Jacinto and how Houston was so intimately involved in helping Peggy finally obtain Robert's Revolutionary War pension in the mid 1840's after Robert's death, among other reported contacts in the intervening years.

Republic of Texas

While two of Robert's children were killed at the Fort Mims massacre, others ended up in Texas before its independence from Mexico. His son Frederick was a member of Austin's Old Three-Hundred and was present in Mexican Texas by 1824. His son William went to Texas as early as Jan 1830 with the Zachariah Landrum caravan. While intending to go much earlier, Robert followed them in about 1832 according to a deposition in his Revolutionary War pension file. He is first documented in Texas on 03 Nov 1834 when Jesse Grimes (a notable Texan who also came from Washington County, Alabama) signed a character certificate supporting Robert's application to enter Joseph Vehlein's colony (14 Nov 1834). Robert was granted one league of land in what would become San Jacinto County on 24 Apr 1835. The town of Coldspring today sits on Rankin's land grant.

Robert reportedly lived near Sam Houston. It is likely this association and their apparent relationship that led to Robert's role in the successful fight against Mexico for Texas independence.

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Chapter 5

The Battle of San Jacinto

Robert was an elderly man by the time 1836 rolled around. He was known as "Colonel Rankin" and was reportedly well respected as a diplomatic man. Robert appears to have played a role in the weeks leading up to the Battle of San Jacinto. Consider the following data points.

1. Yoakum, Henderson, *History of Texas from Its First Settlement in 1685 to Its Annexation to the United States in 1846, Vol. 2*, Redfield, New York, 1855. Page 132
   Yoakum asserts that, "Houston had engaged Messrs. Hubert and Rankin, Indian agents, to sound the Cooshatties on the question of giving the Texans aid." No first names are given and no source information is provided. This appears to have occurred around the time of 15 Apr to 18 Apr 1836 based on Yoakum's chronology.

2. The land grants for Robert Rankin and Matthew Hubert were adjacent to each other in what would become San Jacinto County, so this likely identifies the men cited by Henderson Yoakum above, and they were certainly familiar with one another.

3. Texas State Archives: Republic of Texas Claims, Claims #771 and #1342
   Robert's son Frederick Harrison Rankin (1794-1874) is a documented Indian agent. These records appear to indicate he served in this capacity in 1837 and 1838.

4. Texas State Archives: Records of the Texas General Land Office, Republic Donation Voucher, File 001477, Frederick H. Rankin
   In Jul 1881, Elizabeth Rankin, the widow of Frederick H. Rankin, files an affidavit claiming Fred was a commissioned officer under General Sam Houston for more than 3 months during the year 1836.

5. Handbook of Texas Online, Ann Patton Malone, "Rankin, Robert"
   The biography of Robert Rankin in the Handbook of Texas indicates that Robert "was a friend of Sam Houston, and his influence with the Indians in the region was well known [and] Houston reputedly called upon him in the spring of 1836 to encourage neutrality among the Indians during the crucial Texan retreat toward San Jacinto." No specific source is cited for this fact, but the "Louis Wiltz Kemp Papers" are generally cited for the biography and appear to be the only one of the two citations that would have this information.

6. Texas State Archives: Records of the Texas General Land Office, Spanish Collection, Frederick H. Rankin Land Title, File SC 000001:6
   By 1836, Frederick Rankin was a long-time resident of Texas. He arrived in Austin's Colony in the early 1820s and was granted land on 07 Jul 1824.

7. Eugene Barker, *Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1919: The Austin Papers, Vol. 1 Part 2*, Government Printing Office, Washington, DC, 1924, pp. 1225-1226
   A letter from Frederick H. Rankin to Stephen F. Austin on 16 Oct 1825 expresses his father Robert's desire to come to Texas and his interest in Indian affairs.

8. Robert's daughter Frances married a man named M. Hubert. To my knowledge it has been fairly well established that this was the Matthew Hubert described by Henderson Yoakum.

From all of the facts presented above, here is my best estimate as to how Robert was involved in the effort for Texan independence from Mexico.

At Sam Houston's personal request, it appears likely that Robert Rankin, his son Frederick, and his son-in-law Matthew Hubert were involved in an effort to convince the Indians to remain neutral in the conflict between Texas and Mexico. I also believe that Frederick's role was in a more formal and official capacity as a commissioned officer of the Texian Army representing Sam Houston, giving weight and authority to their mission. These diplomatic efforts continued up until just a few days before the Battle of San Jacinto. I believe that Frederick and Matthew more formally took over the Indian agent roles when the Texas War for Independence ended and Robert left to work on his Revolutionary War pension in St. Landry Parish, Louisiana where he would subsequently die in November 1837.

The successful mission of Hubert and the Rankins allowed Houston to focus on the conflict with Santa Anna without distraction or fear of third-party intervention. This directly contributed to Sam Houston's victory at San Jacinto.

It has been reported that Robert's remains were reinterred in Texas State Cemetery at the centennial of Texas Independence in 1936 partly in honor of his contribution to the fight for Texas independence.

Chapter 6

Correspondence

Below is a summary of letters to or from Robert Rankin and correspondence referencing Robert.

Robert Rankin to Stephen F. Austin, 14 Dec 1826
Barker, Eugene C., *Annual Report of the American Historical Association: The Austin Papers, Vol. 2 Part 2*, Government Printing Office, Washington, DC, 1919-1922, pp. 1531-1532
(initially found at http://www.sonsofdewittcolony.org/slaveryletters2.htm)
(original likely in the Guy Bryan collection, 1901 in the University of Texas archives)

Alabama, Washington Cty, Decr 14th 1826
DEAR SIR
I trust that by a renewed perseverance and industry I shall accomplish my object in getting to Texas with my family and greater part of my Connections in this Country sometime in the ensuing fall The Prohibition of slavery may perhaps prevent some families from moving to Texas perhaps not as many as might be expected and may be an inducement for many to move there that otherwise would never have thot of it I discover from the speech of the president at the opening of the Panama Congress that Religious intolerance may no longer be an objection to moving to Texas I have sent by my son a paper that contains the speech of the President of the American Congress at Panama also Mr. Adam's message to Congress respecting the Panama mission and some other papers my son will forward them to you for you perusal perhaps they are documents that may not have fallen into your hands and you may consider them entertaining. I have never received anything from the Estate of Carter as compensation for the loss of my vessel will you be so good as to inquire of Esq. Kenney respecting the matter I think that I am entitled to) the am t of Carters bond to me. ROBERT RANKIN

Notes

Robert's political activity and public service is well documented through his time in Kentucky and Alabama. Nevertheless, I find this letter to be quite impressive. Robert not only had an interest in the "American Congress at Panama" but also access to copies of the material related to it. I believe it shows quite a level of intelligence and political connection and activity that we might not fully appreciate in Robert at times.

We also see some of the very little evidence we have of Robert's ownership of a boat that may have been mistakenly auctioned off after the man he leant it to died without revealing to others the nature of its true ownership. From this I would surmise that the man he leant it to was surnamed Carter.

Frederick Harrison Rankin to Stephen F. Austin, 16 Oct 1825
Eugene Barker, *Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1919: The Austin Papers, Vol. 1 Part 2*, Government Printing Office, Washington, DC, 1924, pp. 1225-1226

San Jacinto, October the 16th 1825
Dear Sir
I am about to buy Mr Whitlock's land provided you will take a part of it for your fees I am getting so much in your debt I am afraid I will never be able to pay you. this land of Whitlock's is not a very good League but it is Very well timbered and on the tide and some good upland and a good deal of Very good bottom land that overflows the situation of it I think will make it Valuable I would not hesitate to purchase the Land and become paymaster to you if I thought I could pay you in time but I Know I cant without you will take a part of the Land if you feel willing to do so you will please to let me know it as soon as possible, if you have any news respecting the Indians or any thing else I would be glad you would let us hear it as **my old father** is anxious to here (sic) all he can and that from the best source as he expects to set out for Alabama in a short time and wishes to be able to give his friends the best information of the country he can you will do me a favor by writing me an answer by the first opportunity. F H Rankin

Notes

There is probably less to particularly note in this letter. But, we do see Robert's interest in Indian affairs and a desire to move to Mexican Texas, a move which would occur very soon for Frederick but not for almost 7 years for Robert.

Chapter 7

Death and Burial

Before his death, Robert and Peggy had moved, or at least travelled, to St. Landry Parish in Louisiana. The reason for the trip is not known, but Robert likely needed to be in the United States to get better health care or file paperwork to finally get Robert's Revolutionary War pension. In any case, Robert died there in Nov 1837. The exact date is in question because of a misspelling in the deposition of Peggy in the Pension file. His date of death is given as the "thirteth day of November". This misspelling could be "thirteenth" or "thirtieth". I have gone with what seems to have been chosen by earlier researchers - 13 Nov 1837.

After his death, Robert's body was reportedly returned to his land in Texas where he was buried in Butler Cemetery. There has been doubt cast on whether this actually occurred because of the long distance of the trip, the lack of refrigeration, and so forth. I do not consider it completely out of the realm of possibility that his body was indeed brought back to Texas, but for the sake of completeness we should make note of the possibility that it was not.

As noted in the previous chapter on the Battle of San Jacinto, as a part of the centennial celebrations in 1936 Robert's remains were reinterred at Texas State Cemetery. Again, there is doubt as to whether much of the Rankin family approved of the move and whether the body exhumed from Butler Cemetery was actually that of Robert Rankin. Stories are told of the casket coming open and the body it contained having teeth of a man much younger than Robert when he died. And so doubt continues in the minds of some as to whether it is Robert's body that is buried in Texas State Cemetery.

There has been too much passage of time and too little contemporary documentation either in 1837 or in 1936 as to what the actual truth is. For my part, I consider Robert's memorial at Texas State Cemetery to be a very high honor for him and his descendants. It is the place I would go to honor and remember this ancestor. Whether it is his body that lies beneath the memorial is mostly a secondary question to be argued by others. While I am often the first to advocate for completeness and accuracy, at some point certain questions may never be answered completely and arguing over such details distracts from celebrating this man's life and accomplishments through his memorial at a highly esteemed location.

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Chapter 8

Conclusion

When reviewing the life of Robert Rankin, it is obvious that year after year, event after event, we see him laying down layers of experience and service that on the whole turned out to be quite respectable. After supporting the American Revolution for the entirety of the War, Robert Rankin helped lay the foundations for one state (Kentucky), two counties (Mason County, Kentucky and Washington County, Alabama) and at least three cities (Washington, Kentucky; Charlestown, Kentucky; and Coldspring, Texas). During this time he served as a county clerk, a trustee for newly established towns, a delegate to a constitutional convention, an elector, a colonel in the militia, a justice of the peace, and a justice of the quorum. He also appears to have played a role in the history of Texas as one of an informal group of diplomats sent to the Indians at the behest of Sam Houston to convince them to remain neutral in the lead up to the Battle of San Jacinto. Robert's first cousin was Chief Justice John Marshall, he was friends with Sam Houston, he was acquainted with Stephen F. Austin, and it is quite possible he knew or met George Washington. Robert is certainly the most prominent and well-respected person in my family tree and was a devoted American Patriot.

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Chapter 9

Tall Tales

The following are stories and other "facts" I have seen about Robert Rankin. I do not believe any of them are true and have never seen the slightest bit of evidence to support them. My understanding is many of them originated with a two-page "biography" written by a Rankin relative in the 1930's. As this coincides with the Texas independence centennial and the reinterment of Robert's remains at Texas State Cemetery, it is possible that some of the biography is based on extensive research of something like Sam Houston's personal papers. But, lacking this evidence, for the time being the best I can do is document all of these as "tall tales."

- Under orders of President Thomas Jefferson, he worked with Sam Houston during the War of 1812.
  There is no documentation to indicate that Robert served in the War of 1812. His family was involved in Indian conflicts in Washington County, Mississippi Territory during this time, and it is possible these may have involved Sam Houston, but there is no indication Robert was so directly involved, and probably not at the explicit direction of Thomas Jefferson. But, of all of these tall tales, this is the only one that may contain <u>some</u> elements of truth.
- He was one of the men who guarded the door when the Declaration of Independence was signed.
  If Robert truly had close connections to the Marshall family, and if he had any kind of visibility to George Washington, then this could be a possibility. But, there would have to be significant revelations in unknown documentation to even come close to supporting such a claim as this.
- He was a member of the Virginia "House of Representatives" after the Revolutionary War.
  No such thing exists; there is a House of Delegates and a Senate which compose the Virginia General Assembly, neither of which Robert is known to have served in.
- He helped settle the Louisiana Purchase.
  This is patently false since Robert lived in Kentucky and/or the Mississippi Territory during this time which was east of the Louisiana Purchase.
- He was a member of Austin's Old Three-Hundred.
  This is patently false since Robert arrived in Texas many years after the original 300 settlers in Austin's Colony and entered into Vehlein's Colony. His son Frederick Harrison Rankin, however, was a member of Austin's Old Three-Hundred.
- He was at the meeting where the treaty was signed between Sam Houston and Santa Anna. He is reported to have spoken to Santa Anna for Sam Houston in Spanish, "Surrender or die!" - the irony being this is the phrase Santa Anna used at the Alamo.
  Well, I am sure this is just a very fanciful tale, and one that is far less believable than even the "guarding the door" claim above.
- He spoke 5 languages including Spanish.
  Maybe, but who knows.